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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

19 December 1978

MEMORANDUM

Nigeria: Reassessing Afro-Arab-Israeli Ties [REDACTED]

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25X1 The possibility that an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty may be signed within the next few months is causing Nigerian military and civilian leaders to reassess their country's continued participation in the informal alliance of Arab and Black African states that crystallized during and after the Middle East war in 1973. There appears to be growing sentiment within both the military government and the emergent political parties to reestablish diplomatic relations with Israel. The key obstacle to resumed ties is Israel's cooperation with South Africa, which conflicts with Nigeria's key foreign policy objective of eliminating white minority rule and apartheid. [REDACTED]

The Afro-Arab relationship rests primarily on a trade-off of support on Middle East and southern Africa issues. An Egyptian-Israeli treaty would erase the need for such an arrangement in the eyes of the Nigerians. The Nigerians have for some time privately criticized the Arab states for not

25X1 *This memorandum was prepared by the Africa Division of the Office of Regional and Political Analysis and coordinated within the CIA. Questions and comments may be addressed to the author, [REDACTED]*

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extending as much support to the struggle for majority rule in southern Africa as Black Africa has for the Arab cause in the Middle East. They point to the paucity of material aid from the Arabs and charge that the majority of poorer African states have not received adequate economic compensation from the Arabs for severing their ties with Tel Aviv five years ago. The Nigerians are also sensitive to often heavy-handed attempts by the Arabs to expand their influence in Africa--particularly those by Libya and Algeria, which are regarded by the Lagos government as competitors for leadership in Africa. Nigeria, which itself is not dependent on Arab assistance, has always insisted that Afro-Arab cooperation must be mutually beneficial and based on mutual respect for sovereignty. [REDACTED]

Should Egypt and Israel reach an agreement in the near future, it is possible that Nigeria's present military government could normalize relations with Israel before the scheduled changeover to civilian rule in October 1979. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Nigeria could not reestablish relations with Tel Aviv while Israel denies the Palestinians their right to self-determination and continues to occupy part of African land (the Egyptian Sinai). This formulation suggests that Nigeria would be prepared to consider renewed relations with Tel Aviv if an Egyptian-Israeli treaty contained guarantees for Palestinians acceptable to the Egyptians and resulted in Israeli withdrawal from Egyptian territory. [REDACTED]

If the military regime does not act, Nigeria's future civilian government (assuming the transition to civilian rule occurs) might do so. The US embassy in Lagos has reported that recent conversations with some influential members of two of the three major political parties that will contest elections next year indicate there is considerable sentiment for the reestablishment of relations with Israel. This includes the northern Muslim-oriented party, [REDACTED]

The US embassy suspects that pro-Israeli sentiment also exists in the third major party. [REDACTED]

Any initiative by Lagos toward Israel will be heavily dependent on Nigeria's perception of Tel Aviv's relationship with South Africa, given the Obasanjo regime's preoccupation with southern Africa, which we believe a civilian government

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is likely to share. A rapprochement with Israel is potentially threatened by the present government's acute sensitivity to reported Israeli arms sales and alleged nuclear cooperation with Pretoria. There are signs, however, that Nigerian concern over Israeli ties with South Africa may be easing. Nigerian Foreign Minister Adefope recently told a US official that his government has received assurances from the Israelis that Tel Aviv will end its arms sales and curtail trade with South Africa. We cannot confirm that the Israeli government has in fact made such a decision. [REDACTED]

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4 Should Nigeria resume relations with Israel, several other moderate African states which have benefitted little from Arab aid would quickly follow suit. Indeed, they may well take the initiative if Nigeria does not. These countries, including Ghana, Zaire, Zambia, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Central African Empire, and Kenya, were among the last to break with Tel Aviv in 1973. In the past, they have expressed varying degrees of interest in renewing ties with Israel, although none has so far been willing to take the lead. [REDACTED]

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4 For some other African states, particularly the poorer, predominantly Muslim countries, the choice would be far more painful, and an early, wholesale African desertion of the Arabs should not be expected. Despite their frustrations with the Arabs, approximately a dozen or so African states are in fact receiving from the Arabs important development aid and credit loans that are used to offset the increased cost of oil imports which they can not realistically expect to receive from Israel. They also must consider the unstated threat of an oil boycott. Most African countries would find it difficult to secure non-Arab oil suitable for their refineries. [REDACTED]

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